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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Human resources management

Joint Inspection Unit

Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on liaison offices in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Liaison offices in the United Nations system" (JIU/REP/2007/10).

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LIAISON OFFICES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Prepared by

Gérard Biraud

Joint Inspection Unit

Geneva 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES:

To gain an insight into and better recognize the diverse roles of liaison offices (LOs) in the United Nations system and to propose criteria and measures to maximize their effectiveness.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Questionnaires were sent to 26 entities maintaining offices away from their headquarters to represent them at the headquarters of other organizations of the United Nations system, and about 150 confidential validated interviews were held with personnel at all levels, in a representative sample of 18 of the 27 offices, located in Geneva and New York.

These offices have a common basic function of representation, similar to the functions implemented by the diplomatic missions of Member States, each one being the eyes, ears and mouth of its parent organization and promoting its interests, through numerous and various partnerships.

This common basic function has evolved into a striking diversity of LOs of varying sizes, with different staffing and funding, tools, styles, partners and political impact on the international stage.

The function of representation has various, not always well-recognized, facets, such as public information, advocacy, fund-raising, project and programme implementation and capacity building. In addition, services are provided to visitors from the parent organization for a variety of purposes.

Nearly all LOs have in recent years been part of the inter-agency process of rethinking and reforming the United Nations system, and have spent much of their strength to that end, sometimes at the expense of other functions.

From an impact point of view, the implementation of recommendations 1 to 7 would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the overall management, functions and operations of the liaison offices. The implementation of recommendation 8 will also enhance the accountability of the liaison offices.

RECOMMENDATION 2: FOR THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES

The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations concerned should recognize the critical role of the representation function of the liaison offices and provide them with core funding from the Organization's regular or administrative budget, commensurate with the basic tasks to be performed (see paragraphs 11-16, 75-76, and 92-95).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE HEADS

Recommendations 1 and 3 to 8 are addressed to the executive heads, in order that they may:

- Review and assess on a participative basis the strategic importance of their respective liaison offices and the intended impact on their partners and set priorities for these offices, applying a results-based management (RBM) approach (recommendation 1, paragraphs 50-55 and 93-94);

- **Within an appropriately-sized office and a balanced post structure, optimize the use of the skills and competencies of the current staff, and of any specialized staff out-posted from headquarters to the liaison offices concerned, who are additional to the nucleus of core funded posts, without impinging upon either the authority of their director or the cohesion of the office (recommendation 3, paragraphs 56-65, and recommendation 4, paragraphs 60-62);**

- **Ensure proper and timely succession planning through a competitive and fully transparent process, focusing on managerial competencies in the case of the heads of offices (recommendation 5, paragraphs 66-68 and 94);**

- **Ensure that liaison office staff members make full use of learning opportunities, including training, offered by their parent organization and, at their location, by the training sections of the United Nations and other agencies, extending their services in a spirit of collaboration and reciprocity (recommendation 6, paragraphs 69-70);**

- **Using modern communication technologies, such as teleconferencing, improve information sharing between the liaison offices and all other relevant units of the parent organization to sharpen their negotiating and advocacy functions, as well as within each liaison office to foster cohesion; (recommendation 7, paragraphs 77-83);**

- **Ensure adequate audit coverage of the liaison offices, based on proper risk assessment (recommendation 8, paragraphs 89-91).**

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ANNEX I

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEH	Children's Environmental Health
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
DESA	Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GEF	Global Environment Fund
HCHR	High Commissioner for Human Rights
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICT	information and communication technology
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IT	Information technology
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITSD	Information Technology Service Division
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
LO	liaison office
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
RB	Regular budget
RBM	results-based management
RCNYO	Regional commissions New York Office (United Nations)
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDs
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDC	United Nations Development Corporation
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRO	Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna

UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNU	United Nations University
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
XB	Extrabudgetary funds

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Definition of liaison offices

1. The primary task of a "liaison officer" which, in military terms, may be traced at least as far back as the legendary Marathon Run of 490 BC, has been to personally relay messages between headquarters and the frontline (and vice versa). In the sphere of international organizations, the establishment of liaison offices (LOs) between one agency and another has a similar mission: to provide a mutually agreed upon, regular and permanent channel to facilitate communication. The European-based specialized agencies first set up LOs in New York during the 1940s and 1950s, while in the following decades, the United Nations funds and programmes established offices in Geneva. In addition, some semi-autonomous offices of the United Nations Secretariat, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional Commissions, also opened offices in New York. Beyond mere reporting they have, as much as (indeed more than) the military liaison officer, to answer questions and to comment on situations of interest for their Headquarters. A further type of LO appeared, mostly for operational agencies, close to the main sources of much-needed voluntary funding, particularly in Brussels, Copenhagen, Tokyo and Washington, but these are not the subject of the present review by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). In addition, some regional offices, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) offices in Geneva, do carry out some functions normally attributed to a liaison office, but not as their main function, and for this reason they are not reported on here.

Liaison office: definition

For the purposes of the present report, a liaison office is defined as an office established by one entity (organization, fund or programme) of the United Nations system at the headquarters location of another, to ensure the former's representation and coordination on issues and activities of common interest.

B. Reasons for and objectives of the present exercise

2. In the 1990s, while LOs were still being created or expanded, some doubts were being voiced as to the raison d'être of others. Should the traditional way of liasing be maintained, at notable cost to the organizations, at a time of fast-growing Internet services, cheap travel and a wider range of communications such as telephone, e-mail, tele- and videoconferencing? Such questions were raised in particular by members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) which on several occasions, in its reports on the proposed programme budget of the United Nations[1], had called upon the Secretary-General to review the functions and staffing of those LOs funded from the United Nations regular budget. This added to existing concerns related to LOs, such as proposals for the creation or reclassification of posts, known cases of serious mismanagement and the fact that no system-wide study had ever been conducted on the subject.[2]

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[1] See documents A/52/7 paras.115-116, A/54/7 paras.106-107, A/58/7 paras.106, A/59/552, and A/60/7, para. IV.43.

[2] Replying to the request made by the General Assembly A/RES/58/270 of 23 December 2003, para .47, the Secretary-General presented his report A/59/395, entitled "Review of the structure and function of all liaison offices or representation in New York of organizations headquartered elsewhere funded from the regular budget". These are the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United National High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the regional commissions. It contained no recommendations. Following the recommendation of ACABQ, the General Assembly took note of the report. ACABQ reiterated its request in its report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

3. The present report is therefore primarily aimed at gaining an insight into and better recognizing the diverse roles of LOs of the organizations of the United Nations system (chapters I-IV) with a view to proposing some criteria and measures to maximize their cost-effectiveness in the performance of their functions (chapter V).

4. With these aims in mind, the Inspector:

- Reviewed the mandates of the offices, their evolution over time, their current functions, level and type of representation and contacts, budgets and staffing;
- Assessed the continuing relevance of LOs and their comparative advantages in the context of new communication technologies;
- Identified their best practices for dissemination across the system.

C. Methodology

5. Due to limited financial and human resources, the Inspector did not undertake an exhaustive inspection, *stricto sensu*, of all these offices, and decided to:

- Focus on functional issues;
- Conduct interviews of personnel at all levels of the inspected offices (including interns and consultants);
- Have the written and confidential summaries of interviews validated by the interviewees;
- Retain for the present report those LOs corresponding to the above definition;
- Select a representative sample of them.

6. In accordance with the internal standards and guidelines of JIU and its internal working procedures, the methodology followed in preparing this report included: (a) a preliminary desk review and "mapping"; (b) a questionnaire sent to 26 JIU participating organizations; (c) about 160 confidential interviews (of which 150 were validated) in 18 offices[3]; and (d) an in-depth analysis of the information and documentation gathered. Comments from participating organizations on the draft report have been sought and taken into account in finalizing this report.

7. In accordance with article 11.2 of the JIU statute, this report has been finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test its conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit.

8. To facilitate the handling of the report and the implementation of its recommendations and the monitoring thereof, annex I contains a table specifying the intended impact of the recommendations and indicating whether the report is submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies those recommendations relevant for each organization, specifying whether, in the opinion of the Inspector, they require a decision by the organization's legislative or governing body or can be acted upon by the organization's executive head.

D. Scope

9. Among more than 50 offices across the world, recorded as LOs by United Nations organizations, only 27 meet the operational definition in the box on page 1. These offices are located

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[3] These constitute the solid ground on which most of the findings, observations and recommendations below are based, which could seldom be substantiated in the text, except by a few examples or quotations.

at two major duty stations: 18 in New York and 9 in Geneva (table 1 below). Parent organizations comprise, in addition to the three offices representing United Nations entities (OHCHR, the regional commissions, UNCTAD), eight funds or programmes, represented by 11 LOs, and eight specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), represented by 13 LOs. Their budgets range between US$ 0.5 and US$ 4.7 million per biennium. The greatest part of the expenditure is dedicated to staff costs; non-staff resources (mostly rental costs) are often administered locally and, with two exceptions, do not exceed US$ 1 million; (See table 3 below). The combined biennial funding from regular and/or extrabudgetary resources amounts to approximately US$ 46.4 million, *grosso modo* for one-third in Geneva and two-thirds in New York, and their aggregated staffing tables to 170 posts: one Assistant Director-General post, 19 Director level posts, 79 Professional posts and 71 General Service posts. The 18 offices inspected in New York and Geneva, have an aggregate funding of US$ 39.3 million, i.e. 84.7 per cent of the total, and a total of 145 staff employed (85 per cent of the total): one Assistant Director-General, 15 Directors, 67 Professionals and 61 General Service posts (See table 2 below). The staffing of the inspected offices ranges from two to 26 with diverse funding and contracting modalities.

Table 1. Mapping of liaison offices in the United Nations system

	Liaison offices in New York		Liaison offices in Geneva
1.	FAO*	1.	FAO*
2.	IAEA	2.	IAEA
3.	ILO*	3.	UNDP*
4.	OHCHR*	4.	UNESCO*
5.	UNCTAD*	5.	UNFPA*
6.	UNEP*	6.	UN-HABITAT
7.	UNESCO*	7.	UNIDO*
8.	UN-HABITAT	8.	UNRWA*
9.	UNHCR*	9.	WFP*
10.	UNIDO*	* *Inspected liaison offices (18 out of 27)*	
11.	UN regional commissions*		
12.	UNRWA		
13.	UNODC/ UNOV		
14.	UNWTO		
15.	WFP*		
16.	WHO*		
17.	WIPO		
18.	WMO		

E. Acknowledgement

10. The Inspector wishes to express his appreciation to all who assisted him in the preparation of this report, and particularly to those interviewed who so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

II. THE ROLE OF LIAISON OFFICES

11. An LO could be likened to a modem which conveys and translates, in both directions and in the language understood by the other network, the messages exchanged between two entities, each of which transmits and receives alternately in its own respective language, i.e. its own culture and range of activities. In fact, they are communicating through the "modem".

12. An LO acts as the ears, eyes, brain and mouth of its parent organization: it represents it. Concretely, as intelligent eyes and ears, it gathers, analyses, evaluates and reports on selected information deemed to be of interest to its authorities. Indeed, it represents the parent organization to

many diverse partners, as confirmed by the analysis of the terms of reference or mandates of each LO[4] (as a result, each partner sees only a very small part of the activities performed). As its organization's mouth, a liaison officer uses both public and private opportunities to explain the mandate and activities of his or her organization and its current and planned activities, to demonstrate how they meet or could meet the needs of its direct partners and those of the specific country or organization beyond them, by trying always to put him/herself in their shoes and understand their point of view. Finally, the impact of the LO is visible through its influence on ongoing intergovernmental and inter-agency debates and decisions, as well as concrete cooperative actions (see paragraph 16 below).

A. Lack of visibility

13. According to interviewees, many United Nations organizations suffer from a perceived lack of recognition outside their own headquarters location. However, LOs may attract some attention from the local media and delegates, all eyes, in the meanwhile, being turned to the activities of the focal organization. A major element of their visibility is the personality of the Director. The representatives of the United Nations funds and programmes, while playing a major role in the substantive work at General Assembly and Economic and Social Council meetings, often have no single seat reserved for them (no name plates), unlike representatives of the specialized agencies. When, in accordance with the rules, they sit in as observers, they are placed at the back of conference rooms and are allowed to speak only for a limited time, following on after scores of delegates and facing decimated audiences.

B. Many partnerships

14. As listed in their terms of reference (TOR), the partners of LOs are delegates from Member States and from sister organizations, staff from their respective secretariats, members of the media community, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and finally the public at large relayed through the media. In carrying out their representation function, they endeavour to gain the support of these partners (advocacy role), including for financial assistance to fund those programmes and/or projects particularly relevant to each of the specific partners. The administrative support services provided by the LO to officials of its parent organization are also based on its representation function. On the other hand, programme implementation does not appear to be a frequent, nor an important element in a LO profile, as this remains the domain of headquarters and field offices. These roles are developed in chapter IV below.

15. So, as any player in a multilateral hub, with its obvious theatrical dimension, an LO must assume various roles, adapted to the relative position and strength of the organization it embodies and to its specific audiences. In each case, it has different objectives, hence different kinds of relations, as expressed in its TOR, and uses different means and communication tools. In some instances, as for the Regional Commissions New York Office (RCNYO), it plays a catalytic role. At his request, the Inspector was given organizational charts showing the allocation of responsibilities and involved partnerships of each LO staff. Some of them were particularly well conceived, by displaying both their geographical and functional "specializations" (UNHCR NY, for example). Lists of groups and bodies in which offices were participating (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for inter-agency bodies and groups) or lists of agenda items of the United Nations General Assembly where the LO had to play an active role (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) NY), were also provided. Both types were rather impressive, and more extensive than expected. The Inspector also observed in many LOs a trend in recent years towards strengthening relationships with civil society, particularly with universities and NGOs involved in sustainable development (Food and

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[4] As is well expressed in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Administrative Manual, sections 116.1 and 116.3 the Office "takes substantive responsibility in promoting the reflection of the Organization's policies and positions in relevant discussions and decisions of intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies of the United Nations system meeting ...". UNESCO's mission statement for its New York office additionally refers to donors and civil society.

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO), and new, unexpected processes such as the Interfaith Partnership in Environment.

16. To sum up, the LO is a hunter of opportunities, having to make quick connections between ideas, texts, activities and contacts with appropriate people at the appropriate levels before timely weaving of these connections into real situations. The ultimate stage of the relationship between one organization and another, or with a Member State, is the notion of cooperation, also found in many TOR. At some point, talks should lead to complementary actions with partners: one of the primary roles of the LOs in this regard being to systematically identify potential areas for and means of cooperation and to prepare minds to meet before any agreement can be sealed.

III. EVOLVING FEATURES

A. Diversity

17. Besides the basic representation function that is common to all LOs, a number of historical, cultural, technological, political and financial factors directly influence their activities. The result is a great diversity in terms of the size and influence of LOs. The four examples below illustrate such diversity and versatility:

United Nations Industrial Development Organization New York Office

18. Created together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) itself in 1966, the UNIDO Liaison Office in New York had 10 staff playing a significant role. During the 1970s, it was also the Investments Promotion Centre in North America, with 15 to 20 staff members emulating a climate of competition among experts and nations to promote projects all over the world. Later, the staff shrank drastically after its parent organization had lost the support of major contributors. From 2004 to 2005, for 14 months, it was limited to a P-5/Officer in Charge (OIC) and one General Service staff member. A new Director, appointed in 2005, had taken other responsibilities in the field one month before the inspection, at which time the human resources of the office comprised one P5/OIC, one G5 and one consultant.

World Food Programme New York Office

19. The World Food Programme (WFP) Office in New York developed from a small office in the early 1990s, with one international staff member and two assistants dedicated to liaising with the Governments of the United States and Canada, into a fully-fledged office tasked with inter-agency and intergovernmental liaison, as well as public information and advocacy roles by the end of that decade. From 2003-2005, it was, in addition, involved in private sector fund-raising and the total staff grew to 17 (including consultants and interns). In 2006 there was a refocusing, with the private sector responsibilities phased out and divided between headquarters and the "Friends of WFP" in Washington, DC. All other core functions remained.

United Nations Development Programme Geneva Office

20. As has been the case of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) itself, its Geneva office has drastically evolved over the last two decades, from the UNDP embassy in Europe to a specialized business place. Fund-raising and partnerships have become the new priorities, besides the representation function. With the opening of offices in some Central and Eastern European countries, Geneva was no longer the hub that it had been for programme implementation. New programmatic areas appeared, such as trade, human rights, HIV and decentralized cooperation. The traditional activities of technical cooperation for development adopted new modalities with capacity building projects in Africa and Latin America managed from Geneva. With the out-posting of staff from UNDP headquarters to Geneva, the LO became the umbrella of several (more or less) autonomous units, with various funding sources, and a staff that performs on multiple fronts.

Regional Commissions New York Office

21. The RCNYO is unique in the sense that it provides substantive services for the commissions, acting as a hub for disseminating information and coordinating positions to ensure greater coherence of programmatic priorities: it reinforces complementarities and creates synergies, playing a catalytic role and bringing the commissions together. It also produces various synthetic reports and publications on their behalf.

B. Historical evolution

22. The examples above show the changes over time of the functions of the LOs. They also reflect the changes affecting their parent organizations. During the three decades following the Second World War, the tendency was for each organization to affirm its autonomy. The gradual realization of the importance of their, often interdependent, roles in the area of economic and social development later led to a better understanding of their common goals, particularly in the context of the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s, and their cross-cutting issues. As a result, the LOs moved away from purely individual diplomatic representation of agencies or their executive heads, to become more involved in inter-agency work (see section E below), particularly in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. The full participation of some LOs in this trend gave them (and hence their parent organizations) a renewed strategic importance, favoured by the realization of many Member States that they themselves had to be more consistent in their various representation roles within the United Nations system.

C. New York and Geneva

23. The reasons for establishing liaison offices in New York and Geneva can be found in the comparative advantages of these two cities, as stressed by LO staff.

24. New York is clearly the political capital of the United Nations with the presence of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of key Secretariat departments such as the Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, or the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The additional presence of three of the four main funds and programmes: UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF, adds development and humanitarian issues to the agenda[5]. With their linkages to the field and voluntary funding, New York is becoming a critical place for key donors and players. For these reasons, it remains the centre of inter-agency political work and the main focal point for its coordination mechanisms.

25. Favoured by age-old Swiss neutrality, the tradition of multilateralism in Geneva has been primarily associated with:

- Humanitarian assistance with the Red Cross, and later with UNHCR and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), now the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA);

- Peace and disarmament with the League of Nations, the Conference on Disarmament and many other timely peace or dialogue events;

- Global human resources and health issues, with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Hygiene Section of the League of Nations, then the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS);

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[5] The fourth of these, the World Food Programme (WFP) has its headquarters in Rome, together with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

- Human rights with OHCHR, in rapid growth;

- Trade with the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO);

- Economic cooperation in Europe with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);

- Environment activities, UNEP having various units in Geneva, in addition to the secretariats of a number of multilateral environment agreements.

26. Geneva hosts the second United Nations headquarters, as well as 25 international organizations, some 200 Permanent Missions and some 500 NGOs. The United Nations Office at Geneva alone organized 8,657 half-day meetings in 2006. Recently, these developments have led to a reinforced role for the Geneva LOs, requiring staff with specialized backgrounds in such diverse fields as humanitarian affairs, human rights, health and trade, (particularly in the LOs of FAO, UNDP and UNFPA).

D. A regional dimension

27. In New York, some organizations, such as FAO and UNESCO, have given an explicitly regional status to their New York LOs, with mention of "Greater New York" or North America. By way of example: UNCTAD puts on the same footing its global representation function to the United Nations Secretariat, funds and programmes, permanent delegations to the United Nations and its outreach to civil society in North America; the choice made by WHO in favour of "the Great New York" dates from 1999, when the African Office of WHO seconded a senior staff member specifically "to foster awareness of the health problems and priorities of Africa at the United Nations and with greater New York civil society communities"[6]; UNESCO closed its representation in Washington and transferred most of its activities to New York. Some other agencies made a different choice, keeping two offices in New York and Washington (FAO, WFP, WHO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) and, concerning Europe, in Geneva and Brussels (FAO, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), UNIDO and WFP) and even opening a third office in Copenhagen (UNDP, UNFPA and WFP) with the main purpose of fund-raising. UNEP split its own regional office for North America into two offices: the liaison function was kept in New York and the regional office moved to Washington in 1999-2000. The ACABQ reacted strongly to the existence of two separate UNEP offices in North America and two UN-HABITAT offices in Europe and recommended in favour of relocation and streamlining.[7] In response, UNEP emphasized the difference between the functions carried out by its two offices, and their different partners, concluding that reuniting the two offices would not result in either improved cost efficiency or savings, particularly if the relationships and partnerships by now established in Washington were only maintained through frequent travel.

28. From a strategic point of view for the United Nations system organizations, is there duplication or competition of functions between New York and Washington in North America, and between Geneva and Brussels in Europe, between the global functions and the regional functions? Or are there subsidiarity and complementarities? This depends on the functions entrusted to them: where global representation as such is primarily concerned, New York and Geneva are considered to be of critical importance; where fund-raising is the major preoccupation (as well as for contacts with both the United States of America and the international financial institutions or with the operational services of the European Commission), Washington and Brussels would take the lead.

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[6] From "The road ahead", an interesting 2004 non paper on the WHO New York office.
[7] See A/60/7, section IV, paras. 43 and 50.

E. Dynamics of inter-agency work

29. The most striking of all the evolving features of the work of liaison offices is the inter-agency coordination role which is today at the forefront of, even sometimes taking precedence over, the intergovernmental representation function. It is carried out on a daily basis under the umbrella of any of the existing United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB); the United Nations Development Group (UNDG); the four executive committees created in 1997 within the United Nations Secretariat, the Secretary-General's Policy Committee and other United Nations reform bodies, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee/Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (IASC/ECHA), or their respective affiliates.

30. Participation in many inter-agency mechanisms, as legitimate as it might be, has proved to be highly demanding, in terms of time and resources for most agencies, but primarily for those represented through their liaison offices in New York and Geneva, given the increasing number of meetings and the complexity of the issues discussed. Decisions are often taken without enough time for the LOs to consult their headquarters and obtain the result of their decision-making process. The preparation and the follow-up of all these meetings have taken a real toll on the time and energy of some LO staff members. The Inspector hopes that the period 2005-2006 has seen the culmination of this situation, with the one-time comprehensive programme of work and visits of the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, which was nearing completion at the time of the inspection in New York. On the Panel's own website, the process was summed up with humour as: "meet, consult, meet, consult, draft, redraft, meet, redraft, meet, redraft"[8].

31. The Inspector heard some concerns about the delineation of responsibilities between UNDG and CEB, about the relationship between the members of the Executive Committee and UNDG support group members, and about the leading role of UNDP. The Inspector hopes that these issues will be addressed by the General Assembly within the ongoing discussions on United Nations reform.

32. One particular example is that of OHCHR which, in addition to its representation role in inter-agency groups concerned with its own area of specialization, is the sole member of all four United Nations executive committees, in line with a decision of the Secretary-General aimed at integrating human rights into all areas of United Nations activities– a role that is not always welcome. The New York office is thus frequently called upon to represent the High Commissioner, at the Under-Secretary-General level, at all four of the executive committees and their numerous sub-groups, given that so many of their meetings are held in New York. The New York LO must, therefore, develop expertise on issues other than human rights in order to identify entry points in any decision-making process. This difficulty is compounded by the limited staffing of the LO. This was the only LO where the Inspector was not able to carry out interviews with all selected persons, not through any lack of goodwill, but rather due to the fact that all staff was otherwise fully occupied elsewhere, as confirmed by reference to a shared Lotus Notes timetable. Before considering the request of the Inspector, some staff members had already to decide which meetings, where their presence was simultaneously required, they could afford to miss! Mainstreaming might, for similar reasons, overload the UNEP office in New York in future.

33. Inter-agency coordination also takes place on a bilateral basis among organizations, often regulated by memorandums of understanding (UNIDO) or based on joint bilateral or multilateral programmes, implemented in some cases by LOs. The Inspector identified a number of them in the areas of forestry and timber (ECE and FAO), trade (UNCTAD, UNDP, World Bank, ITC, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and WTO) or on more specific topics such as child environmental health and climate change (CEH) mobilizing UNEP, UNICEF and WHO.

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[8] Summary of the Recommendations of the Secretary-General' s High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence, November 2006 (www.undg.org).

34. For 10 years, monthly informal meetings among the Directors of LOs in New York have allowed direct exchanges on issues of common interest. In Geneva, a similar process of working lunches was started in 2004, and received new impetus from late 2006 benefiting further from the introduction of the clever principle of rotation of responsibility.

F. Launchers of initiatives

35. The relative autonomy of LOs and their (outposted) staff, as well as their unique position between political discussion and hands-on activities (all the while in contact with other partners and field offices), have enabled some offices to launch influential new initiatives, more or less successfully. For instance, the Geneva office of UNFPA was the launch platform for the Emergency Response Office, the predecessor of the Humanitarian Reproductive Unit: this was so successful that it was relocated to Headquarters, leaving Geneva only as a simple channel to liaise with donors and keep New York informed. Space is too limited to quote here a number of other effective, sometimes financially profitable, initiatives, including with partners of civil society, where the role of LOs or some of their staff members was decisive.

IV. OTHER FUNCTIONS

A. Public information and advocacy

36. New York and Geneva offer different supporting environments to the information officers of the LOs. Both cities enjoy a community of media specialists from the world's press agencies as well as, although less and less so, from the major newspapers and television and radio channels. In New York, interest lies mainly in the political aspects of the United Nations, in particular Security Council affairs, whereas the Geneva press professionals are a priori interested in all aspects, including operational, of the activities of any organization of the system.

37. For many years, some LOs discharged their information function through the operation of documentation centres, frequently run with support staff responding to requests from individual users and disseminating the press releases and publications of the parent organization. The explosion of Internet, research engines, virtual libraries and knowledge sharing sites has revolutionized this classic modus operandi.

38. Outreach and advocacy became major components of the strategy of organizations competing for visibility and funding. Professional staff were entrusted with establishing contact with the media and the general public through interviews, press conferences and briefings, organizing special events from the local to the worldwide level and building up partnerships with civil society, NGOs and the private sector, in order to reposition their organizations and communicate selective messages, in line with established corporate priorities. The exceptions were some two small LOs, ILO (because of post vacancy) and FAO where the function remains with the headquarters. In offices where no officer was dedicated to communication or public information, heads of offices, liaison or substantive officers carried out the outreach and advocacy functions through daily interventions, as well as delivering both informal presentations and formal speeches to various audiences.

39. A few LOs still disseminate information using more traditional methods, among them FAO in Geneva, ILO and the Regional Commissions Office in New York. They maintain documentation centres with hard copies of documents that nowadays can easily be found on the Internet or are located at central libraries. None of these offices could respond to the Inspector's query about the number of requests received. Some LOs are seeking solutions to the problem, for example at the Regional Commissions Office in New York, where staff members concerned are assigned additional responsibilities for maintaining the office website (for dealing with frequently asked questions), or for working with the network of headquarters libraries (for the collection and dissemination of publications and other relevant documents).

40. The UNDP and WFP LOs are at the forefront of the new communication concept and are the best equipped in terms of staff to carry it out. The post of Deputy Director of UNDP Geneva is dedicated to this function, covering all European countries (except the Nordic States, the United Kingdom and Ireland), together with a team including a communication partnership manager. In addition, in isolation from that team, a senior project staff member is heading the Communication and Publications Unit of UNDP-GEF (Global Environment Facility), responsible for the dissemination of information on the impact of projects implemented and for maintaining relationships with constituents. Although the Geneva office launched and produced in the past a very successful television production (called Azimuth) presenting the activities of UNDP and its sister organizations in the field and broadcast by nearly one hundred channels worldwide, television production is no longer entrusted to the UNDP Geneva office.

41. Communication is not a function of FAO offices, with the exception of some contacts with the media in the frame of special opportunities such as round tables or workshops. Press releases are prepared and issued by headquarters. However, FAO liaison offices are innovative in communicating with delegates through PowerPoint presentations and their own websites. Websites are very unevenly used by LOs to disseminate information and the quality of support and available information on or from the LOs varies from minimal (UNDP, UNESCO) to active (FAO, UNEP).

B. Fund-raising

42. The majority of LOs have only a facilitating fund-raising role through advocacy. Among the principal exceptions, UNDP Geneva has made fund-raising its first strategic priority for a number of European countries, has been delegated authority and is accountable for results, with measurable financial indicators. Through the organization of creative events, such as yearly football "match against poverty" matches organized with the participation of Zidane, Ronaldo and their friends, it has raised US$ 1.5 million dedicated fully to financing field projects. Additional funds were raised through galas, concerts and sports competitions (US$ 700,000). The use of the major part of these funds had not been yet decided at the time of the inspection, months after income recording.

43. In a quite different way, WFP, as already mentioned in paragraph 19 above, first established a private sector fund-raising function at its New York office between 2002-2005 and further decided to outsource it. Officials responsible indicated that the organization lacked the required in-house expertise to effectively carry out this function.

C. Operational activities

44. In the past, some LOs have been very active in operational activities, including the involvement of NGOs. Currently, the following four inspected LOs carry out capacity building:

a) UNDP Geneva is involved in capacity building in the following areas:

- Trade: one professional staff member is fully dedicated to the management of the trust fund of the Integrity Framework set up by the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of 2005 to help the least developed countries to mainstream trade in national plans to fight poverty through technical assistance projects (15 countries, with a ceiling of US$ 1 million per project);

- Human rights: one professional staff member is working in a programme to integrate the human rights dimension in various countries and conducting pilot studies;

- Partnerships: a Hub for Innovative Partnerships has been created at the LO, led by a D-1 and staffed with two other Professionals to develop a cooperation strategy with regional and local Governments through a territorial approach to development, and encourage links between local authorities and NGOs.

b) FAO Geneva is conducting capacity building, through the organization of round tables and workshops on trade issues in Geneva and a joint venture with UNECE on forestry in countries with formerly centralized economies. Two professional staff and one consultant are in charge.

c) FAO New York office used to liaise between FAO Rome and OCHA in New York on the design and approval of projects under some trust funds.

d) UNFPA Geneva plays a similar triangular bridging role for country appeals in humanitarian emergencies, carries out research and development, provides technical advice to the field on reproductive health and sexual abuse and conducts training of trainers for Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

45. Additionally, RCNYO is now the clearing house for the "development account" projects to enforce complementarities and create synergies. A database has been developed and a matching exercise done to determine similarities among project proposals submitted by the different regional commissions. Through this exercise the projects have been rationalized and efficiency savings achieved.

46. In principle, regional and country offices should be in a better position than LOs to undertake some of the above-mentioned activities. Bringing the assistance closer to the intended beneficiaries is one of the main purposes of decentralization policies.

D. Support services

47. As for any office away from headquarters, LOs provide support services to managers and staff on official mission to the host country; they arrange meetings, press conferences, presentations, launching of publications, etc; prepare notes, briefings and speeches for them, organize office facilities, make hotel bookings and may provide transportation for them. The accumulation of such tasks could be time-consuming and sometimes disruptive of the office work, because of the extra workload they generate, particularly for small offices and during peak periods such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, special events and conferences when high-level officials are received. RCNYO for instance provides backup to the regular meetings of the Executive Secretaries held two or three times a year and to the annual meetings of the chiefs of programme planning of the commissions, which may consist of 15 to 20 persons at a time, with the support of one Professional and three General Service staff. To arrange effective services during this period, without having to resort to temporary staff or excessive overtime, the head of office schedules flexible working hours for support staff. Some New York and Geneva LOs take advantage of the presence of visitors to organize briefings for the staff and larger audiences on issues of interest, a good practice that the Inspector encourages.

48. Despite repeated efforts from both sides, the Inspector was not able to obtain from the Department of Safety and Security in New York any statistics on the number of visitors from each organization having requested ground passes in 2005 and 2006, which would have helped assessing the efficiency of their LOs' representation function.

49. In view of the variety of functions carried out by the LOs, which goes far beyond the initial concept of liaising, a number of organizations have opted for a more general denomination such as "UNDP Office in Geneva" or "the New York Office of OHCHR". The Inspector would encourage other organizations to do the same.

V. RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

A. Results-based management: planning, reporting and evaluation

50. Work plans and individual work plans are not only a planning tool but also a prerequisite for enforcing accountability for results, through the performance appraisal system. However, most of the LOs inspected do not apply a results based approach as a planning tool, even though their parent organizations have formally adopted it. With rare exceptions, such as WFP New York and Geneva and UNHCR New York, their annual work plans, if any, and individual work plans in use at the time of the inspection did not go beyond defining objectives, goals, and activities. The expected results and their indicators of measurement are usually lacking.

51. In all LOs, a living calendar is the main tool for planning, organizing meetings (assigning responsibility for attendance on a case-by-case basis) and sometimes reporting. In this connection, WFP New York even holds morning meetings of professional staff to establish priorities for the day. In the view of the Inspector, these are helpful planning tools but they do not suffice and could not substitute for effective results planning. As a stand-alone practice, they constitute poor planning.

52. The Inspector acknowledges the impact that some external factors, such as the high number of meetings called at short notice, could have on effective planning. Notwithstanding the above, he believes that the only way to minimize their negative effect is through prioritizing LO functions at the organization level; this would help in sorting the many functions to be undertaken and meetings to be attended at the LO level, through some flexibility. LOs need to be fully reactive in a timely manner, even in cases of conflicting obligations. This is when prioritization is most necessary. Prioritizing means being proactive and not only reactive to external factors. Prioritizing implies a critical rethinking by LOs of each of their functions in terms of expected impact. Managers of LOs need to set priorities in line with established strategic objectives as defined by their parent organization at the executive level.

53. In conducting such critical rethinking the questions to answer are: what do we want to achieve? How can the expected impact be measured? What resources (including time) should and could be allocated to it? What kind of meetings should be actively followed (physical presence, oral interventions and written records) or could be serviced through shared attendance with colleagues from other organizations? What aspects are essential in reporting to all concerned at headquarters and the field? What is the optimal frequency and format of reporting? How could new technologies be better used to these ends?

54. Self-evaluation is a must for reporting purposes and reporting on results is the regular way to demonstrate the value added of these offices. Further, self-evaluation is critical to feed back findings into the planning process. Through this type of exercise, WFP New York, for instance, realized the need to strengthen its representation function at the intergovernmental level since it has been overtaken by other priorities at the inter-agency level.

55. In this connection the Inspector noted that some LOs prepared weekly/monthly summaries and annual reports of activities. They did not, however, usually report on impact, which is not to be confused with the immediate outcome of meetings. Only the ILO New York office reported at the year-end on how the office contributed to meeting established organizational goals.

Recommendation 1

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations concerned should thoroughly assess the strategic importance of their liaison office(s), and define priorities for them in terms of intended impact, using results based management (RBM) as a planning, reporting and evaluation tool.

Recommendation 2

The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations concerned should, based on the assessment of their liaison office(s) by the respective executive heads, recognize their strategic role and provide core funding from the organizations' regular budgets commensurate with established priorities.

B. Balancing the staffing structure

56. The actual staffing of LOs at the time of inspection (2006), excluding vacant posts, but including consultants and interns, varies greatly, between three (UNRWA Geneva, UNIDO New York, UNESCO Geneva) and 26 staff (UNDP Geneva). In fact, most of these offices have between eight and 12 staff (see table 2 below). The Inspector believes that there is no magical standard formula to determine the optimal number of staff of an office. Applying the RBM approach, the staffing of an office is determined by the results to be achieved in line with the established strategic priorities for that office.

57. In the Inspector's view, most of the inspected LOs were adequately staffed in terms of the number of Professional posts in the approved staffing table. However, the staffing structure was unbalanced in some instances (at FAO New York and Geneva, UNEP, WHO and the RCNYO) where the number of support staff was equal to or higher than the Professional staff. (It appeared that some functions currently performed by support staff could be streamlined, such as finance and administration, librarianship, taking dictation, typing, opening the door to visitors, filing and distributing documents).

58. The Inspector is particularly concerned with the efficiency of the function of administrative and finance assistant. In his opinion, given the limited delegation of authority granted to these offices, the number of transactions and human resources actions processed does not justify the employment of two full-time staff at WFP New York nor one full-time assistant at the FAO and UNFPA offices in Geneva. The organizations concerned commented that these persons also carried out support services for visitors, meetings and consultations. At UNDP Geneva, at the time of the inspection, as many as five finance assistants and two human resources assistants were employed in various sub-units to support project implementation or provide services on a cost-sharing basis to other offices.

59. The Inspector also found that staff members were highly graded at some offices. For instance, at UNDP Geneva most of the support staff (two G-7, five G-6) and half of the Professionals (one D-2, one D-1, five P/L-5) were in senior positions due to lack of career opportunities and mobility, and possibly as a result of the out-posting of professionals from certain headquarters divisions to distinct units.

60. Outposted staff perform tasks that required a certain degree of expertise beyond the knowledge expected of a good generalist. They are linked in terms of funding and technical support to the releasing division and are operationally independent, with direct reporting lines to headquarters. From the Inspector's observations, such arrangements could work very well as long as the administrative and technical lines of authority are clearly defined and do not try to impinge on each other.

61. The price to pay today for having some out-posted specialists within a LO is that they are not entirely available to the office: the importance of the work done and time spent abroad to give high level technical advice (including through publishing) to field offices and projects should not be underestimated. Pursuing this kind of work with very few staff members also diminishes their availability and concrete possibilities to represent the parent organization through actual participation in Geneva or New York meetings of all kinds. The net result is a very strong requirement for new technical specialized capabilities among the LOs staff, to enable them not only to inform, but, as acknowledged by some recent terms of reference of LOs, "to advise" their headquarters on technical issues.

62. The cost-effectiveness of such arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that additional structures are not created at the liaison office level with posts that are artificially highly graded. Ultimately, the staffing table of the office and job descriptions should be reviewed to ensure that new strategic priorities are addressed.

63. In this connection, the Inspector noted that the terms of reference of the office and job descriptions of liaison office staff were often too general or outdated. WFP New York has recently undertaken a reclassification exercise of all posts and it is applying generic job descriptions that could serve as a model for other LOs.

64. Heads of offices at the time of the inspection were also differently graded: one at the Assistant Director-General level (WHO New York), five at the D-2 level (UNDP Geneva, OHCHR and UNHCR, FAO and UNESCO in New York), and three at the P-5 level (UNCTAD and UNIDO New York, UNRWA Geneva), while the majority of them are at the D-1 level.

65. Some organizations believe that a paramount consideration is that the head of a LO should be graded at a level where he/she can deputize for the executive head of the organization in relation to important meetings, events or local contacts with United Nations officials and missions. The Inspector is of the opinion that the grading should be commensurate with the level of responsibilities attached to it, including the number of staff supervised, which varies greatly from one office to another (see table 2 below). It is possible that too many secretariat officials and delegates give more importance to the grades than to the functions as such.

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of United Nations system organizations concerned should ensure a balanced post structure and grading of the staff of liaison offices, based on its required effective participation in issues of mutual interest at the international hubs concerned and on an inventory of skills and competencies.

Recommendation 4

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations concerned should conduct a cost-benefit-analysis prior to outposting additional staff, over and above the necessary nucleus of core-funded staff, to liaison offices.

Table 2. Staffing of inspected liaison offices (June to October 2006)

ORGANIZATIONS	ENCUMBERED POSTS			CONSULTANTS	INTERNS	TOTAL	VACANT POSTS
	D	P	GS				
RCNYO	1D-1	1 P-5	1G-7, 1G-6, 1G-4			5	1 P-4
FAO GVA	1D-2	1 P-5, 2 P-4	1G-6, 3 G-5	1		9	
FAO NY	1D-2	1 P-5, 2 P-4	2 G-6, 2 G-5, 1G-4			9	
ILO NY	1D-1	3 P-2	1 G-7, 1 G-6, 1G-5, 1G-4, 1G-2		2	11	1 P-5, 1 P-3
OHCHR NY		2 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3	1 G-7, 1 G-6, 1 G-5, 3 G-4		2	15	1 D-2
UNCTAD NY		1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3	1 G-6, 1 G-5		2	7	
UNDP GVA	1 D-2, 1 D-1	5 P-5, 2 P-4, 5 P-3, 1 P-2	4 G-7, 3 G-6, 1 G-5	3		26	
UNEP NY		1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3	1G-6, 1G-5, 2 G-4			8	1 D-1, 1G-6/7, 1G-3
UNESCO GVA	1 D-1	1 P-3	1 G-5			3	
UNESCO NY	1 D-2	2 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2	1 G-5, 2 G-4	2	2	14	
UNFPA GVA	1 D-1	2 P-5, 1 P-4	1 G-6, 1 G-4	2	3	11	
UNHCR NY	2 D-1*	3 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2	2 G-7, 1 G-6, 2 G-5			14	1 D-2
UNIDO GVA	1 D-1		2 G-3			3	1 P-5
UNIDO NY		2 P-5	1G-5	1		4	1D-1
UNRWA GVA		1P-5	1G-6		1	3	
WFP GVA	1D-2	2 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-2	1 G-6, 1 G-4	1	1	9	
WFP NY	2 D-1	1 P-5, 3 P-4	1 G-6, 1 G-5, 1 G-4	2	1	13	
WHO NY	1 AD-G	2 P-3, 1 P-2	1 G-7, 2 G-5, 1 G-4,		4	12	1D-1, 2 P-5, 1 G-5
TOTAL	**1 AD-G**	**24 P-5**	**10 G-7**	**12**	**18**	**175**	**2 D-2**
	5 D-2	**20 P-4**	**16 G-6**				**3 D-1**
	10 D-1	**15 P-3**	**19 G-5**				**3 P-5**
		8 P-2	**13 G-4**				**1 P-4**
			2 G-3				**1 P-3**
			1 G-2				**1G-6-7**
							1 G-5
							1 G-3
	16	**68**	**61**				
	145			**12**	**18**	**175**	**13**

Source: Inspections.

* One of these posts is encumbered by a WFP staff member seconded to UNDG for which he works full time.

C. Lack of leadership

66. As of October 2006, the position of head of office was vacant in four of the eleven offices inspected in New York and a fifth position had just been filled after 10 months. If not purely coincidental, this situation reveals an apparent absence of proper succession planning for a crucial level in the five organizations concerned (OHCHR, UNEP, UNHCR, UNIDO and WHO). The

Inspector witnessed overburdened officers-in-charge, staff frustration and lack of motivation due to uncertainties.

67. Traditionally, the selection process to fill the position of head of office suffered from being highly discretionary, not to say sometimes politicized, rather than openly competitive, with a number of losses and missed opportunities reported to the Inspector.

68. As a result, some heads of office lacked the required managerial experience and leadership competencies to efficiently use the skills of their staff, allocate tasks and build cohesive teams. The Inspector received spontaneous complaints of harassment in the workplace and lack of recognition for work performed and competencies.

Recommendation 5

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations concerned should ensure timely and proper succession planning for the heads of their liaison offices. Heads of offices should be selected through a competitive and fully transparent process, focusing on managerial competencies.

D. Other symptoms of weaknesses

69. Other symptoms of poor human resources management at the organizational level are:

- Posts funded from different budget sections of the same headquarters budget (UNESCO New York), in addition to voluntary funding sources, thus enforcing separate biennial negotiations by the head of office with various directors and making an overall assessment more difficult;

- Project posts (L) in a headquarters location, without any link to projects;

- A majority of posts funded from extra-budgetary resources (UNDP Geneva);

- A succession of short-term contracts (ILO New York, WHO) including for higher level posts, partly wasting their potential;

- Very long periods of posts vacancies (ILO, OHCHR, UNEP New York, WHO);

- Consultants used on a regular basis to perform tasks normally carried out by regular staff. At the time of the inspection, ten consultants were employed in seven offices (FAO Geneva, WFP New York and Geneva, UNEP, ILO, UNESCO New York, and UNDP Geneva), two had been previously working as interns performing similar tasks (WFP New York);

- Interns have become indispensable to ensuring a permanent presence in the numerous intergovernmental meetings. At the time of the inspection, 18 interns were employed at half of the LOs inspected (ILO, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UNESCO, WFP and WHO New York and UNFPA, UNRWA and WFP Geneva). However, their status does not allow them to make speeches nor to publicly respond to any query addressed to their related organization. In general, conditions ruling their employment are quite restrictive to avoid backdoor recruitment. Two regimes of compensation for their services coexist, according to the organizations concerned: namely none and 10 per cent of the local daily subsistence allowance (DSA). Consequently, the benefit of an internship with the United Nations is restricted to those who can afford it.

- Staff imposed by the United Nations Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), without request (UNCTAD);

- Staff on the staffing table but having always worked elsewhere on secondment or even (past case) forbidden to appear in the office;

- Staff housed by a LO without being an integral part of its activities (UNEP) or appearing on the staffing table though assigned elsewhere; this is raising in particular the issue of staffing the secretariat of some interagency coordination mechanisms, as UNDG;

- No rotation of staff; some remained in the same office for more than twenty years (FAO New York);

- Limited learning opportunities. Managers did not encourage nor actively seek them, with some exceptions (FAO New York, WHO, WFP). In New York, no access is granted to the United Nations training courses to staff from specialized agencies, except for language courses;

- No career opportunities for support staff that have themselves acquired advanced education and qualifications. Many General Service staff members were overqualified for the work performed;

- No regular evaluation of individual performance.

70. The Inspector acknowledges that many of these issues could be resolved only at the organizational level through the reform of human resources management ongoing at most organizations. He would therefore refrain from making any specific recommendation at this point in time, except for the issue of training, which can be immediately addressed.

Recommendation 6

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should, in a spirit of collaboration and reciprocity, ensure that in New York and Geneva, the learning opportunities offered to their own staff be extended to the personnel of LOs in these locations, and encourage the staff of their own LOs to make full use of available learning opportunities offered at their location by the training sections of United Nations and other agencies.

71. Traditionally, a LO was part of the department for external relations, which monitored its work, shared its provisional calendar of meetings and events and, in an ideal world, would read and judiciously disseminate its reports, and send timely briefs taken from the specialists of the issues discussed. Implicitly, a classic liaison officer would be an open-minded generalist at the professional level, with a very good knowledge of his or her organization, including field experience and good relational skills. Feedback from headquarters was crucial to obtaining the necessary inputs on time. Since this feedback was irregular, and depending on the importance or urgency of an issue, LO managers and officers could be considered sufficiently qualified technically and therefore empowered to influence the process and ultimately make a pronouncement without receiving any guidance. This was possible when the focus of discussions was basically political, allowing common sense to prevail.

72. This situation has changed drastically during the last decade towards more out-posted specialists as a result of:

- More sophisticated content in the substantive thinking in working groups and subsidiary organs of all kinds, where the topics discussed now require the regular (or even permanent) presence of real experts, often out-posted specialists[9];

[9] The UNFPA office in Geneva is a typical example of such a move. The UNFPA staff includes diplomatic and medical profiles, with a dual reporting line, the Director of the office reporting to the Information, External Relations and Resource Mobilization Division (IERD) and the specialists to their respective technical units, to which they continue to belong as out-posted staff, with a daily collaborative relationship.

- The impact on LO staff of the daily realities from the field, through new communications technologies;

- New responsibilities brought to the LOs by increased inter-agency work.

73. Reporting lines are diverse among different organizations and even sometimes among members of the same LO. For instance, at the time of the inspection, UNDP LOs belonged to the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships (BRSP), WFP LOs to a Policy and External Affairs Department, FAO LOs to the Office of the Special Adviser to the Director General, UNHCR to the Executive Office of the High Commissioner, UNFPA LO to the Information, External Relations and Resource Mobilization Division, the Head of RCNYO simultaneously to the five Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions, etc. The type of organizational structure to be avoided is one whereby LOs become lost among numerous field or country offices.

74. Within one office, different reporting lines to Headquarters may coexist for out-posted staff.[10] The existence of these complementary lines does not raise any problem, as long as the head of the office is kept well informed of the main ongoing works and there is a regular meeting of all staff members where everyone learns what has been done and is to be done by everyone else. On one occasion, the Inspector revealed, inadvertently, to a Director that a job description had been issued for recruitment as an out-posted position in her own office. At the other end of the scale, Directors should not put up obstacles to direct reporting by LO staff members to concerned substantive headquarters or field units, nor try to monopolize this function through any bureaucratic means.

E. Financial management

75. The 2004-2005 biennial budgets of individual LOs ranged between US$ 0.3 (WMO New York) to US$ 4.7 million per biennium (UNHCR New York, followed by UNDP Geneva, US$ 4.4 million). The majority of the inspected offices were financed exclusively from regular funds; only four were financed through a combination of regular and extrabudgetary resources (UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA and WHO) and one was fully funded from extrabudgetary resources (UNHCR) (table 3, below).

76. Not surprisingly, staff costs account for more than three-quarters of the budget of the inspected offices. Generally, non-staff resources locally administered do not exceed US$ 0.5 million (the operational budgets of FAO, ILO, UNEP, WFP and WHO New York are higher). Only exceptionally do non-staff costs exceed US$ 1 million (UNHCR New York and UNDP Geneva). The bulk of these resources were allocated to rental of space and information technology and communications, often as reimbursement of services provided by the United Nations at an agreed upon tariff, which, some years ago, had been the subject of protracted negotiations between the United Nations and the various funds and programmes.

[10] As an example, while the Head of UNDP Office in Geneva reports to the BRSP, as a result of out-posting, some elements of the LO were directly reporting to the Bureau for Development Policies "BDP" UNDP – GEF at Headquarters.

Table 3. Budget of liaison offices (2004-2005 in US$)

ORGANIZATIONS	Staff costs			Non Staff costs			GRAND TOTAL
	RB	XB	Total	RB	XB	Total	
INSPECTED LOs							
RCNYO	1,481,800	0	1,481,800	103,800	0	103,800	**1,585,600**
FAO GVA	1,982,000	0	1,982,000	403,000	0	403,000	**2,385,000**
FAO NY	2,021,000	0	2,021,000	815,000	0	815,000	**2,836,000**
ILO NY	1,578,528	0	1,578,528	707,222	0	707,222	**2,285,750**
OHCHR NY	2,100,000	0	2,100,000	100,000	0	100,000	**2,200,000**
UNCTAD NY*	779,000	0	779,000	8,300	0	8,300	**787,300**
UNDP GVA	2,657,908	432,872	3,090,780	1,302,000	44,000	1,346,000	**4,436,780**
UNEP NY	280,600	1,862,000	2,142,600	27,400	786,000	813,400	**2,956,000**
UNESCO GVA	889,000	0	889,000	0	0	0	**889,000**
UNESCO NY	2,687,209	0	2,687,209	0	0	0	**2,687,209**
UNFPA GVA	842,600	219,200	1,061,800	180,200	200,000	380,200	**1,442,000**
UNHCR NY	0	3,594,795	3,594,795	0	1,139,260	1,139,260	**4,734,055**
UNIDO GVA**	1,340,936	0	1,340,936	216,839	0	216,839	**1,557,775**
UNIDO NY**	1,083,636	0	1,083,636	422,518	0	422,518	**1,506,154**
UNRWA GVA	596,456	0	596,456	83,683	0	83,683	**680,139**
WFP GVA	867,800	441,800	1,309,660	382,034	0	382,034	**1,691,634**
WFP NY	1,166,400	0	1,166,400	598,332	0	598,332	**1,764,732**
WHO NY	2,194,000	0	2,194,000	0	697,000	697,000	**2,891,000**
SUB TOTAL	**24,548,873**	**6,550,667**	**31,099,540**	**5,350,328**	**2,866,260**	**8,216,588**	**39,316,128**
NON INSPECTED LOs							
IAEA GVA	506,200	0	506,200	37,500	0	37,500	**543,700**
IAEA NY	929,800	0	929,800	57,300	0	57,300	**987,100**
UN-HABITAT GVA	0	693,200	693,200	0	247,874	247,874	**941,074**
UN-HABITAT NY	874,500	303,700	1,178,200	109,500	131,902	241,402	**1,419,602**
UNODC/UNOV NY	481,400	359,412	840,812	0	217,100	217,100	**1,057,912**
UNRWA NY	821,675	0	821,675	52,930	0	52,930	**874,605**
UNWTO NY***	0	0	0	22,639	0	22,639	**22,639**
WIPO NY	215,300	0	215,300	745,000	0	745,000	**960,300**
WMO NY****	309,350	0	309,350	0	0	0	**309,350**
SUB TOTAL	**4,138,225**	**1,356,312**	**5,494,537**	**1,024,869**	**596,876**	**1,621,745**	**7,116,282**
GRAND TOTAL	**28,687,098**	**7,906,979**	**36,594,077**	**6,375,197**	**3,463,136**	**9,838,333**	**46,432,410**
Grand SUB TOTAL NY	**19,004,198**	**6,119,907**	**25,124,105**	**3,769,941**	**2,971,262**	**6,741,203**	**31,865,308**
Grand SUB TOTAL GVA	**9,682,900**	**1,787,072**	**11,469,972**	**2,605,256**	**491,874**	**3,097,130**	**14,567,102**

*UNCTAD: Some additional non-staff costs are covered by the central budget, beyond the indicated figures.

**UNIDO - Euros converted to US$ at 1.24 (average 2004 - 2005 value).

***UNWTO LO was in the creation phase, with a part time GS staff member.

**** WMO: Swiss francs converted to US$ at 0.80 (average 2004-05 value).

Sources: Responses to JIU questionnaire as completed.

F. Information management

77. As already mentioned, information gathering and sharing is at the very heart of the representation and advocacy functions of LOs. Managing information effectively both externally and within every office is therefore key to their success.

78. Contrary to some expectations, new technological advances have not lessened the importance of the representation function, but rather changed the way in which LOs operate and expanded their impact.

79. New technologies have not rendered the work of LOs superfluous. Only a permanent presence and structure can build up the intimate knowledge, the "intelligence work" necessary to obtain the accurate and timely information to influence decisions which, more and more frequently, are pre-negotiated at informal meetings. Further, regardless of the participation of headquarters officials in decision taking, through videoconferences, teleconferences or mission travel, the groundwork that paves the way for such decisions, their implementation and follow-up can only be assured through the permanent presence of qualified staff in situ. A fruitful and sustainable relationship of trust can only emerge from an initial eye-to-eye contact (possibly regularly renewed), which is the ultimate raison d'être of any diplomatic mission or LO.

80. The use of electronic mail, teleconferences and videoconferences has dramatically increased the flow of information and communications exchanged with LOs, added to the complexity of and accelerated the decision-making process. Decisions are taken and relevant information disseminated within a shorter period of time, sometimes even in real time to multidimensional networks of headquarters units, field offices, diplomatic missions, NGOs and other partners.

81. The Inspector noted, however, that despite the fact that more and more discussions are country-focused at New York and Geneva, few LOs regularly exchanged information through e-mail with field offices and vice versa. An even lesser number (WFP New York, UNDP and UNFPA Geneva, the regional commissions and the WHO New York office) used teleconferences or videoconferences as a regular means of communication and decision-making. WFP New York reported that tele- and videoconferences had proven to be extremely useful during humanitarian crises in keeping key players up to date, bringing the field perspective to ongoing negotiations, conveying the positions of the respective organizations and improving inter-agency coordination. WFP also uses regular teleconferences to share updates and topics of common interest among its external relations offices in Rome, Geneva and New York. Similarly, UNDP organizes weekly teleconferences with its LO communications officers. Prior to these meetings, e-mails are exchanged on major events to facilitate discussion and decision taking.

82. The Inspector encourages all managers to overcome the financial and technical obstacles to the day-to-day use of new communications technologies and to simplify the relevant administrative arrangements. The benefits largely exceed any reasonable investment, particularly as a substitute for travel to interviews.

83. At another level, information should flow effectively within the office. Being easy and natural to share within small teams, information should be carefully managed within larger offices, particularly those composed of several units, through tools and behaviour conducive to transparency and trust, such as online calendars of individual activities, regular meetings with all staff members to freely exchange views on substantive and administrative issues, briefings and debriefings by staff on mission, etc. WFP Geneva and OHCHR New York are among the good examples in this regard. The Inspector regrets however that these conditions are not met at all the offices inspected.

Recommendation 7

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations concerned should ensure that relevant information is judiciously and broadly disseminated between liaison offices and their respective organizations as well as internally within liaison offices, using all means of communication to maximize their outreach, such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing, staff meetings and (de)briefings of staff on mission.

G. Common premises and services

84. In New York, only OHCHR is housed within the United Nations Secretariat building. Most LOs rent office space (DC-I and DC-II buildings) from the United Nations Development Corporation[11] at US$ 59 per square foot, per year. ILO New York is the only LO located in a commercial building at US$ 51.64 per square foot per year. In Geneva, rent is paid at the *Maison internationale de l'Environnement* and at the Palais des Nations, at the equivalent of US$ 50.86 per square foot, per year.

85. Information technology (IT) services are provided on the basis of service level agreements by the United Nations at a rate of US$ 2,000 per workstation in New York for a full package and US$ 1,200 in Geneva, a noticeable difference. In each hub, prices and conditions vary according to the sharing of responsibilities between the Untied Nations and the other organizations.

86. At the time of the inspection, UNDP Geneva was providing IT, financial and personnel services to the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), UNOPS, UNFPA and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) on a cost-sharing basis.

87. Procurement of office supplies and equipment or travel services are not always channelled through the United Nations. Some offices do not see any added value in it, in view of the small volume of transactions and potential for delays. The United Nations travel agency in New York apparently accepts only clients from the United Nations Secretariat and funds and programmes which are part of their corporate agreement; the liaison offices of specialized agencies are therefore excluded from these services.

88. ACABQ proposed in paragraph 106 of its report (A/58/7) to create "a consolidated common liaison service for all United Nations funds and programmes now represented at United Nations Headquarters". The Inspector is of the opinion that for the United Nations system LOs, and even for the United Nations itself, given the diversity of mandates, required qualifications, rules, procedures and work processes, it is impossible at this juncture to integrate other liaison offices services.

H. Oversight

89. The Inspector checked that a majority of offices had been audited in the recent years either by their internal oversight services (FAO in New York and Geneva, ILO, RCNYO, UNESCO New York, UNIDO and UNRWA Geneva) or by external auditors (UNCTAD, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, OHCHR). In some cases (UNESCO NY, UNFPA Geneva) this had permitted a needed overhaul of management practices. The Inspector noted that the most important LO in terms of funding (UNDP Geneva) had not been audited for many years.

90. The WFP office in New York was evaluated by a consultant in 2004 but without any follow-up on the recommendations. An internal evaluation was in progress at the request of the office management at the time of the JIU inspection. The Inspector did not record any other evaluation of the liaison offices inspected.

91. The Inspector acknowledges that in strict financial terms, the level of resources managed by each office may not justify frequent financial audits. On the other hand, the strategic importance of the LOs and their relative isolation involve certain risks, which go far beyond the financial resources at stake. It is therefore crucial that these offices receive adequate oversight coverage, through either management audits and/or periodic evaluations, based on a proper risk assessment.

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[11] The United Nation Development Corporation is a New York State public benefit corporation, created in 1968 to assist the United Nations community with its office space and other real estate needs.

Recommendation 8

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations concerned should request the heads of oversight services to ensure adequate audit and evaluation coverage of liaison offices.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

92. These are the tasks, strengths and weaknesses of LOs in the complexity of their representation function. The inspection revealed that most LOs are doing a significant job, which goes far beyond the traditional liaison function. In this respect, the Inspector fully subscribes to the statement of the Secretary-General in his report (A/59/395) on LOs funded by the United Nations programme budget in New York and extends it to most of the LOs of the United Nations system: "These representative offices (...) provide substantive contributions to the work programme of their parent offices, while maintaining a much smaller portion of traditional liaison functions. Activities focus on matters requiring representatives' participation in meetings both at the intergovernmental level and within the Secretariat. These offices are operating with the benefit of current technology and are striving to be as effective as possible within the limited budgetary resources available to them." The recommendations addressed to their authorities, as contained in this report, are aimed precisely at helping them to do so.

93. In terms of value for money, the Inspector found that:

- At the time of the inspection (June to October 2006), the cost-effectiveness of several offices was reduced by an insufficient number of (filled) posts or by the fact of being insufficiently distant from their headquarters;

- Some long-established offices (in particular of specialized agencies), with a traditional liaison function, had a potential for more efficient and innovative management;

- Others, more creatively, brought professionals on board through all types of arrangements and funding sources. FAO, UNFPA, and UNDP in Geneva belong to this group; the Inspector observes that while this approach has many advantages, it is not risk-free;

- A last group of offices was succeeding, through legitimate ambition and the work of overstretched but excellent staff, in making a difference for their respective organizations in terms of influence and impact. Involved in politically important discussions, they enjoyed strong delegation of authority and/or had direct (but not exclusive) reporting lines to their executive head (WFP, UNHCR, OHCHR), thus being in a better position to advise and influence ongoing negotiations.

94. In the opinion of the Inspector, the comparative advantage of the last category of LOs is the capacity and willingness of some executive heads to integrate them into their strategic vision for their organizations. Extraordinary accomplishments result additionally when the right managers are found and staff members are duly empowered to share in and achieve such a vision.

95. Altogether, LOs contribute to an articulated United Nations system in the twenty-first century. They help their partners at intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies to understand their complementarities, to "inter-think" and interact more naturally. In a largely unacknowledged way, they enable the United Nations system to deliver as "one United Nations". Within the United Nations system machinery, these offices are as discreet, as ancillary, but as indispensable, and (relatively) cheap as oilcans in some physically fragile machinery.

ANNEX I

Overview of action to be taken by participating organizations on JIU recommendations JIU/REP/2007/10

		Intended impact	United Nations, its funds and programmes											Specialized agencies and IAEA											
			United Nations*	UNCTAD	UNODC	UNEP	UN-HABITAT	UNHCR	UNRWA	UNDP	UNFPA	UNICEF	WFP	ILO	FAO	UNESCO	ICAO	WHO	UPU	ITU	WMO	IMO	WIPO	UNIDO	UNWTO	IAEA
Report	For action		☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒	☒
	For information		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recommendation 1 (page 12)	e	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 2 (page 13)	g	L			L	L	L		L	L		L	L	L	L		L			L		L	L	L	L
Recommendation 3 (page 14)	e	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 4 (page 14)	e	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 5 (page 16)	g	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 6 (page 17)	c	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 7 (page 20)	b	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E
Recommendation 8 (page 22)	d	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E		E			E		E	E	E	E

Legend: **L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ
E: Recommendation for action by executive head
■ : Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced accountability **b:** dissemination of best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** enhanced controls and compliance **e:** enhanced effectiveness **f:** significant financial savings **g:** enhanced efficiency **o:** other

* Covers all entities listed in ST/SGB/2002/11 other than UNCTAD, UNODC, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNRWA.